



# SCAVENGER HUNT: WHERE IS GINA THE GEOGRAPHER?

## TEACHER VERSION

**Subject Level:**

Elementary School  
Geography

**Grade Level:**

4-5

**Approx. Time Required:**

60 minutes

**Learning Objectives:**

- Students will be able to use an online resource and a map to understand the characteristics of a place in order to identify its location.
- Students will be able to describe the characteristics of their own community.

## Activity Description

Students will participate in an online scavenger hunt based on a story that a geographer named Gina, who loves to travel, has escaped to an undisclosed location. It is their mission to bring her back to the school. Students must follow a series of clues about the location—including landmarks, weather, and population—and use a U.S. Census Bureau data tool called State Facts for Students to answer questions that lead them one step closer to finding Gina.

**Suggested Grade Level:**

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**Topics:**

- Cities
- Population

**Skills Taught:**

- Collecting data
- Drawing conclusions
- Gathering information from an interactive data source
- Making inferences

## Materials Required

- The student version of this activity, 6 pages
- A computer with Internet access for each student or group of students
- Teacher computer with Internet access and a projector to display Web sites

## Activity Item

This activity uses the following online tool:

- State Facts for Students  
[www.census.gov/schools/facts](http://www.census.gov/schools/facts)

For more information to help you introduce your students to the Census Bureau, read "[Census Bureau 101 for Students.](#)" This information sheet can be printed and passed out to your students as well.

## Standards Addressed

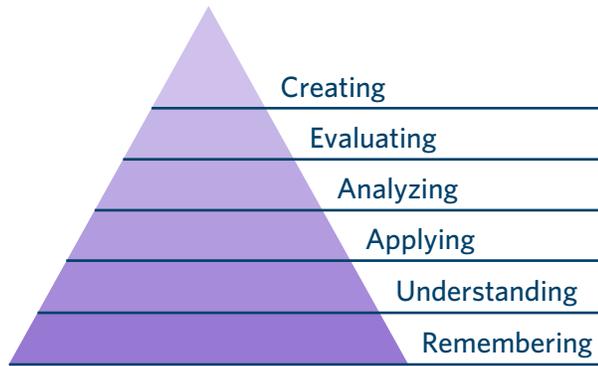
See chart below. For more information, read "[Education Standards and Guidelines Addressed by Statistics in Schools.](#)"

## National Geography Standards

| Standard  | Grade | The student knows and understands:   |
|---|-------|--|
| <b>4 - The physical and human characteristics of places</b> | 4     | <p><b>The Concept of Place</b></p> <p>1. Places are locations having distinctive characteristics that give them meaning and distinguish them from other locations.</p> <p><i>Therefore, the student is able to:</i></p> <p>a. Describe the distinguishing characteristics and meanings of several different places, as exemplified by being able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Identify and describe categories of characteristics that define a location as a place (e.g., weather characteristics, population density, architectural styles, landforms, vegetation, cultures, types of industry).</li><li>Identify and describe the defining characteristics of the student's community as a place.</li><li>Describe how certain places may have meanings that distinguish them from other places (e.g., cemetery, historical park or battlefield, religious shrines or temples, state or national parks).</li></ul> |

## Bloom's Taxonomy

Students will **apply** what they learn from online data to correctly identify a location.



## Teacher Notes

### Before the Activity

Since this is largely an individual activity where students will move at their own pace, suggested timing cues are included to help guide teachers.

20 minutes

Students must understand the following key terms:

- **Landmark** – an object, building, or feature of an area that is easily recognized
- **Population** – the number of people living in an area

Teachers should be aware that although there is a map (of just the United States) on the home page of the State Facts for Students tool, students should be referencing the map (of the United States and bordering land, like Mexico) in their versions of the activity so that they better understand where the United States appears in the world—and don't incorrectly assume that states like Arizona border the ocean. Students may notice places like Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands depicted on the State Facts for Students map, so teachers may need to explain that those are U.S. territories and not states.

Teachers should give students context for the activity by introducing them to the Census Bureau and explaining what it does. Information to share with students or questions to ask them—in a slideshow format or through a class discussion—can include:

- The Census Bureau counts all the people living in the United States and in other places that belong to the United States, like Puerto Rico. The Census Bureau also figures out how many people live in specific areas, like counties. (Teachers can model this by counting everybody in the classroom, including all students and themselves.)
- When the workers over at the Census Bureau count people, they learn some interesting things about them too, like how old they are. (Teachers can take a short census of the classroom, asking students: How many of you are 9 years old? 10 years old? 11 years old? And so on.)
- The Census Bureau can tell you the number of [insert a common age for your students]-year-olds in the country—or even in each state. (Teachers can ask students: Any guesses on how many [X]-year-olds are in [insert the state where your school is located]? Teachers should go to State Facts for Students ahead of time to find out.)
- The Census Bureau does more than just count people. For example, it collects information about businesses (including how much money certain businesses and industries make), and it helps communities make planning decisions such as where to build new roads and schools.

For more information to teach students about the Census Bureau, teachers should reference the “Census Bureau 101 for Students” handout (link in the “Materials Required” section above).

Teachers may decide to put students into pairs or small groups if access to computers with Internet is limited or if teachers think students would do better with a partner.

Teachers should navigate to State Facts for Students, modeling how to use the tool by clicking on various places on the map (and/or selecting a place from the drop-down menu above the map) and showing students the information that appears. Teachers should reiterate that the Census Bureau has gathered information about people in all of the states, U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia. Teachers should also mention that the data include information about the businesses in each of those places.

## During the Activity

35 minutes

Teachers should frequently check in with students as they work, because if students get just one answer wrong, it could throw off the rest of the activity for them. Teachers may want to bring the entire class back together after the first question to make sure they have the nine states/territories correct before they move on. If students need help with the first question, teachers could give them a list of ten to 20 states/territories that could be options (making sure the nine answers are included) so students can cross out those that do not fit the clues.

Some students may be able to guess the final answer before they respond to all of the questions, but teachers should ask that students still respond to each question so that they can confirm their assumption.

## After the Activity

5 minutes

Teachers should discuss the answers, calling out for question #11 that each state or territory has specific characteristics that distinguish it from others—such as population, weather, landmarks, and culture.

## Extension Ideas

- Teachers could create a similar scavenger hunt about the state/territory where their school is located (if not already captured in this activity).
- Students could create their own shorter scavenger hunt for a partner to complete.

## Student Activity

Click [here](#) to download a printable version for students.

### Activity Item

This activity uses the following online tool:

- State Facts for Students  
[www.census.gov/schools/facts](http://www.census.gov/schools/facts)

### Student Learning Objectives

- I will be able to use an online resource and a map to understand the characteristics of a place in order to identify its location.
- I will be able to describe the characteristics of my own community.

Gina the Geographer has escaped to a secret location. It is your mission to find her and bring her back to the school! You must follow clues about landmarks, weather, population, and more to figure out where she's hiding! Gina could be in one of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, or one of the five U.S. territories.

You will use a U.S. Census Bureau data tool called State Facts for Students and this map of the United States to help you find Gina.



1. Read the following clues from Gina and then fill in the table below. Use your map to help you!
  - Brrrr! I do not like cold weather! I am somewhere that is usually warm, even in the winter. They almost never get snow. (Hint: I am not located in any state north of South Carolina.)
  - Surf’s up! I love the beach, which means I have chosen a state/territory that’s right next to water.
  - Did you know that the Pacific Ocean is really cold? Almost too cold to swim without a wetsuit! So I decided to go somewhere that’s along the Atlantic Ocean, which includes the Gulf of Mexico.
  - The Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and American Samoa are places I really wanted to go, but they were just too far away!

Based on these four clues, list all of the states or territories I could be in. (Hint: There are nine!)

| Possible States/Territories |                     |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1                           | Texas               |
| 2                           | Louisiana           |
| 3                           | Mississippi         |
| 4                           | Alabama             |
| 5                           | Florida             |
| 6                           | Georgia             |
| 7                           | South Carolina      |
| 8                           | Puerto Rico         |
| 9                           | U.S. Virgin Islands |

Now let’s eliminate some states/territories until you find out where I am. Go to State Facts for Students, at [www.census.gov/schools/facts](http://www.census.gov/schools/facts), to answer these questions:

2. I love being around people, so I knew I would rather live somewhere with a high population. Which state/territory can you eliminate because it had the lowest population (as of 2010\*)? And what is that population?

**U.S. Virgin Islands: 106,405**

\*Note: Island Area data is collected every 10 years. The data will be updated when the 2020 Census counts are available.

3. Let’s talk about another place where I am not hiding! An important part of the culture of people who live in this state/territory is language. I wish I spoke Spanish, but I don’t. Although many people in this state/territory speak both English and Spanish, I was still worried that it may have been hard for me to communicate with everyone I met there. If I lived in the capital city, San Juan, it could have been easier to get around, but I ultimately decided to go elsewhere. Which state/territory can you cross off your list?

**Puerto Rico**

- I brought my dog along on my journey, so I wanted to make sure I had a lot of options for pet and pet supply stores once we reached our destination. Which state/territory can you eliminate because it has the fewest pet and pet supply stores (as of 2018)? And how many are there?

**Mississippi: 44**

- I have a sweet tooth and eat candy maybe a little more often than I should (don't tell my dentist!). This state/territory had only 19 candy and nut store in 2018, so I knew I couldn't go there. Which state/territory can you eliminate?

**Alabama**

- I grew up in Columbia—the largest city in this state/territory as well as the capital. I like where I'm from, but I wanted to go somewhere new! Which state/territory can you eliminate?

**South Carolina**

- Zoos and botanical gardens are important to me because I am an animal lover. I also love nature! So I escaped somewhere that has a lot of zoos and gardens. Of the states/territories left, which can you eliminate because it has the fewest zoos and gardens, according to the most recent data (2018)? And how many are there?

**Louisiana: 9**

- This large state/territory has a lot of fast-food restaurants compared with some other states/territories—a grand total of 21,986 (as of 2018). I try to eat healthy most of the time (aside from a sweet now and again), so I knew I'd prefer a location where there weren't as many places to get hamburgers and fries. Which state/territory can you eliminate now?

**Texas**

- You're getting really warm now! Only two options left. This state/territory had only three ice cream and frozen dessert makers in 2018, which is a small amount compared with other places. Although I usually try to eat healthy, I love to treat myself to ice cream every once in a while, so I knew I'd rather go somewhere that had more ice cream makers! This state/territory also has less than 170 persons per square mile. Which state/territory can you cross off your list?

**Georgia**

- There is a very important landmark in this state/territory that sets it apart from the others. It is related to amusement parks, cartoon characters, animals, and movies. Name the state/territory where I am having a blast. (And if you know the name of the landmark, write it here too!)

**Florida (Disney World)**

Did you find Gina? Raise your hand and ask your teacher to check your answer. If you found her, congratulations! You successfully completed your mission.

11. Describe what you learned about places in this activity.

**Student answers will vary, but students may mention that places have specific qualities that help make those places different from other locations.**

12. What are some characteristics of the state or territory where you live? (Think of what you already know about your community, and then use State Facts for Students to see what else you can find out.) Is what you know about your own community the same as (or different from) the facts about your state/territory?

**Student answers will vary, but responses should reference students' previous knowledge of where they live and how that compares with anything new that students learned from State Facts for Students. For example, if students believe they don't have any amusement parks around them, but the tool lists 15 in the state, they may point this out.**